7: Thompson--369-370 J-4 (no date) 1937 Laotians-
116, 647, 645, 653, 177.64 France
636.64

"The centralized administration of Laos was not only part of the French mania for simplification and uniformity, which for various [370] reasons had reached Laos later than elsewhere, but was primarily stimulated by the economic importance of Laos's mines and town building in the post-war period. The modernization of Vientiane was especially notable, for it had been buried under the jungle, 400 kilometres from the sea, and on an almost unnavigable river. When the potential wealth of the country became evident, the administration began to veer away from the Protectorate ideal to direct government, making tabula rasa of native institutions. Some Hanoi officials took it into their head to suppress the King of Luang-Prabang as an obstacle to transforming Laos into a bona-fide colony. Varenne had the good sense to recognize how much the Laotians venerated their king, and so he rescued his throne from the assimilationist peril. The Protectorate was saved, and to push Laos farther along the trail blazed by Annam and Cambodia, a native advisory assembly was given to the country in 1929, and a mixed Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce, both of which recently sent delegates to the Grand Conseil. The process can only fully develop when the rail and road network is completed--that administrative pipe-dream linking Laos to the rest of the Union--which in 1936 looked perilously near fulfilment. An unfortunate corollary is that the forty-year tariff freedom of Laos, a miracle in French colonization, died in 1932 with the growth of the Siamese and Indo-Chinese railroad construction."

"Below the throne are five ministers.

First Minister . . . . Phya Muong Sène.
Second Minister . . . Phya Muong Chane.
Third Minister. . . . Phya Maha Sena.
Fourth Minister. . . . Phya Muong Koua.
Fifth Minister . . . . Phya Muong Saï.

They are appointed by the kings."

victorious (1), and this expedition, which would seem to have 648*
643*

1. With the help of Trân-Ninh. 728
175*

been imposed on him, is the only campaign which is related during his long forty-three year reign.

According to the Annals he strictly observed the Buddhist teaching and followed, in a more docile manner than his father had done, the pious counsels of Pha-Maha-Pasaman-Thala-Tiao, his spiritual director, "and so his kingdom knew a long period of peace and prosperity." He was a great builder of temples, and erected the pagodas of Manorom, Ouposot (with a library which was given the manuscripts which had been brought from Angkor), and Xieng-Kang which was built in memory of his daughter, the young princess Sivayaka, who died of smallpox at the age of twelve. 643* 175* /645 792/

The Three Hundred Thousand Thaïs. In 1376 he gave orders for a general census of the inhabitants of Lang-Xang. The results gave 300,000 "registered" Thaïs, not counting women, children, bonzes, foreigners, slaves and Khas (2), and Oun-Hueun took /53/ 161 175* 654

2. The number of registered non-Thaïs was about 400,000.

/C. A. M. Translator's note. Page 53 is devoted to a map: "Lan-Xang and surrounding regions at the death of Fa-Ngoun (1374)". / as his reigning name Phaya-Sam-Sène-Thaï, the King of the Three Hundred Thousand Thaïs.

Social Organization. These folk then constituted a society grouped by families and divided into Nobles and Commoners. The Nobles were given certain privileges and helped to administer the kingdom, from the dignitaries who were princes of royal blood down to the simple officials who were responsible for collecting taxes, for assembling labor drafts, for transporting goods, etc. 631 565 175*

In the provinces the heads of circumscriptions (Muongs) were elected either from the Nobles or from the Commoners, but the choice of the electors generally fell on the son or some relative of the person who was to be replaced, unless there were some unworthiness or notorious incapability.

he fled secretly by way of the Mékong, but Nang-Keo-Phimpha learned of his flight and had him pursued and massacred on his raft a little way downstream from the capital. 643* 175* 662

We can only conjecture as to the motives which impelled this princess, fiercer even than a Frédégonde or a Marguerite de Bourgogne, to make such a hecatomb of kings. Was she a blood-thirsty despot, or simply a royal Lampito with an exasperated temperament? (1) /62/ We do not know, but it is certain that she /582/

1. Marriages between brothers and sisters were always permitted in the royal family of Lan-Xang. They were forbidden, on the other hand, among the common people.

finally inspired such terror in the court that there was no one left to intrigue for the throne, the last two sons of Lane-Kham-Deng being too young.

Kam-Kheut, king 1435-1438.

It was then that Nang-Keo-Phimpha discovered the son of a palace slave girl who had once been singled out by King Sam-Sène-Thaï for her beauty. The young man, Xieng-Ma by name, conquered the Gorgon by his keen intelligence and a perfect knowledge of the events of the great reign of Oun-Hueun. She had no doubt but that he was her brother, and forced him on the court as sovereign under the name of Kham-Keut (golden birth). Whether the latter was a docile tool in the hands of the princess, or whether Nang-Keo-Phimpha became genuinely and profoundly attached to her creature, calm seemed permanently restored to the palace when Kham-Keut fell sick and died of dropsy after a three years' reign.

Death of Nang-Keo-Phimpha (1438). Then there was an explosion of hatred against Nang-Keo-Phimpha. This death was seen as a /63/ punishment inflicted on the kingdom by Heaven for having accepted a usurper. Anger got the better of fear, and the ministers arrested the princess, tied her to the rock of Pha-Dieou and had her shot. "Her body was abandoned to the crows and vultures." 669 643* 175*

SAI-TIAKAPHAT (1415), KING 1438-1479. 645

The Council of Ministers at once set out to choose a new king 175* 643*

645 who should be in the dynastic tradition. After a long deliberation
175* which was made laborious by the fact that Lane-Kham-Dèng's children
643* were minors, it offered the crown to Thao-Lu-Sai, the governor of Muong-Sai-Muoi and last legitimate son of Sam-Sène-Thaï. Thao-Lu-Sai accepted and mounted the throne under the name of Phaya-Sai-Tiakaphat.

643* Twenty-three years old, he assumed power under difficult condi-
175* tions. The excesses of Nang-Keo-Phimpha had indeed weakened royal authority within the country and aroused the attention of the neighboring princes who, whether tributaries or not, were more or
/668/ less jealous of the power of the king of Lan-Xang. The rich province of Vientiane had always retained an inclination /64/ towards independence, and its governor, Sai-Moni, thought that the moment had come to shake off the yoke, but he was assassinated before he even had time to set out on the march (1). The failure of this movement

/346/ 1. The temple of Wat-Thai is supposed to have been erected in his memory by the inhabitants of Vientiane.

which was crushed "in the egg" doubtless gave cause for reflection to the vassals, who lay quiet and congratulated themselves on their reserve when they realized that Tiakaphat was a wise, steadfast and prudent sovereign who was quite determined to maintain the integrity of his States. He governed peaceably for forty years, intelligently seconded in the last years of his reign by his eldest son Thao-Kone-Kèo, who rapidly acquired an enlightened knowledge of the kingdom's affairs and an unquestioned authority in the Council of Ministers. The king created the unprecedented title of Sene-Muong for him, named him prince of Xieng-Lo and gave him the position of Oupahat.

721 The Annamite Invasion (1478-1479). Meanwhile the Annamites
643* were only waiting for an opportunity to extract vengeance for the
175* affront which Lê-Loi had once suffered and also to consolidate their western frontier which lay open on the Black River. /65/ If they had not done so before it was only because they had been prevented by the incessant incursions of the Chams on their southern frontiers, but in 1471 the king Lê-Thanh-Tôn occupied the land of Qui-Nhon and succeeded in destroying the kingdom of Champa once and for all, and in 1478 he used a futile incident as a pretext for invading Lan-Xang. If we are to believe the legend, Tiakaphat had refused

439 after a ten year reign without leaving any sons." He thus explicitly
643* contradicts the native documents which recount the many competitions
175* for the throne which had divided the royal family, and according to which the "present king" succeeded his uncle (Visai).

He adds that the government of the country was divided, under the
175* high authority of the king, between three great officials:
642
645 1. The head of the army who was "governor of the province which produces benzoin" and commander of the city of Vientiane. He doubtless refers to the prime minister Tian-Thala, the son-in-law of Souligna whom he calls Tevinia-Assen;

2. The governor of Nakhone or viceroy, who commanded the whole southern part of the kingdom, including Attopeu, as far as the Cambodian frontier. This was the Nan-Tharath of the Annals, whom he calls Lachaen;

3. The minister of the Palace who is in charge of relations with ambassadors.

These three high officials "were given /110/ an audience only every two or three months, unless there were some necessity or the king had them summoned expressly."

/693/ Next to the king there was a "tribunal in charge of civil and criminal affairs" which was composed of five of his relatives who had daily access to the sovereign.

/651 Finally, Van Wusthof estimates the king's income at "two piculs"
643/* per year of gum lac, benzoin and gold (1).

1. Cf. Georges Maspero, op. cit. /Un empire colonial francais: l'Indochine. Paris, 1929-1930./ A picul was equal to 61 kilograms.

175* The Account of Father Marini (1666). This evocation of the
114 Laotian kingdom in the seventeenth century does not differ appreciably, on the whole, from two travel accounts published in Italian at about the same time by the Jesuit fathers Martini (quoted p. 104, note 2) and Marini. A translation of the latter's accounts was placed on sale in Paris in 1666 (2). No matter how picturesque it may be in its

/127/ 2. Relation nouvelle et curieuse des royaumes de Tonquin et de Laos, traduite de l'italien du P. Marini Romain, par L.P.L.C.C. (F. Lecomte; cel.), a Paris, chez Gervais Clouzier, au Palais, sur les degres, en montant pour aller a

727 ruins, for the city had been given over to fire and bloodshed. The
175* Siamese had deported six thousand families to the right bank of the Mekong, had taken all the elephants and removed four hundred warhorses. They had not, however, been able to lay hands on /174/ the royal treasures, which had been carefully hidden. Phia-Bodin had then left for Bangkok leaving matters in the hands of Phia-Papha and driving towards the Menam terrified throngs of men, women and children who were followed by long files of carts filled with plunder and statues taken from the overturned temples (1).

1. Including the Prabang, carried off for the second time.

645 Since Phia-Papha had only a small force at his disposal, he left
175* Vientiane, crossed the river, dispatched a messenger to his master and settled in Thabo to await the turn of events.

721 Battle of Makheng. According to a Siamese version, the Annamite
175* "commissioners" accompanying Anou interceded in his behalf and obtained his pardon. In this version, the king of Vientiane was given permission to settle in the city again, but then had all the Siamese who were there massacred by surprise, immediately sent out his troops in pursuit of Phia-Papha and was again defeated in the vicinity of Makheng (2).

2. Cf. Phanuphanthuvongswardja, op. cit. /Repression de la revolte de Vientiane, Bangkok, 1926./

726 In the meantime the king of Siam, at the news of the rebel's re-
643* turn, had sent out a new army 20,000 men strong which reached
175* /175/ the banks of the river in forced marches. Then Anou realized that struggle was impossible, and so as not to bring down further misfortunes on his subjects he resolved to go to China. He left by the valley of the Nam-Song with only one of his wives and 120 devoted partisans (1).

1. Cf. Captain de Pelacot, op. cit. /"Le Tran-Ninh historique." Revue indochinoise, Hanoi, 1896./

648* Chao-Noi delivers up Anou (1831). The Siamese general sus-
175* pected that he had made his way towards Tran-Ninh and sent orders

644

Then come the minister princes:
Latsavong, first prince, minister of the right.
Latsaboute, second prince, minister of the left.
Komakhoune, third prince, minister of the middle.
Komamoune, fourth prince, minister of the civil services.
All these high dignitaries are princes of royal blood and bear the hereditary title of "Tiao" (noble).

[491] The members of the royal family employed in the service of the government (Latsakane) under the orders of the minister princes are the:

Tiao-Soutthisane, Tiao-Soulignak, Tiao-Kattignak, Koune-Laboute, Si-Koune-Laboute, Tiao-Sisoulate, Tiao-Pho-Tisane, Tiao-Inthisane, Tiao-Tham-Makat-Tika, Tiao-Inthitiak.

645

The three first mandarins bear the title of "Phaya" or "Phania" depending on the region. They are, in order of importance:

1. The Phaya-Muong-Sen, first mandarin of the right, head of the Senam (1) and head of the justice department.

(1) In Siamese "Sena" designates the "Great Mandarins."

2. The Phaya-Muong-Tiane, first mandarin of the right and head of the courts.

3. The Phaya-Muong-Khang, first mandarin of the middle and head of the service of public works, of transports, etc.

The council of the kingdom or "Senam" is composed of high officials who hold the rank of "Phaya" or "Phya" (2) and who are

(2) "Phaya" is the highest grade of the administrative hierarchy. In Upper Laos anyone may attain it, while in Lower Laos it is accessible only to noblemen. The grade just below it is that of "Phya." Mandarins of lesser importance bear the title of "Luong," "Koune" or "Nai."

the:

Phaya-Muong-Khoua, second mandarin of the right.
Phya-Sieng-Neua (or Maha-Sena) } Councilors of the King,
Phya-Sieng-Sa } members of the Senam,
Phya-Phoumma } under the orders of the
Phya-Si-Song-Muong } Phaya-Muong-Sen.